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*Family Welfare & Planning*

# LEGON FAMILY RESEARCH PAPERS

No. 4

## ASPECTS OF FAMILY WELFARE AND PLANNING

edited by  
Lila E. Engberg

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### **Acknowledgement**

The papers presented in this volume were read at the third in the series of interdisciplinary Family Research Seminars held at the Institute of African Studies in March 1973.

The themes of the first two seminars were domestic rights and duties in Southern Ghana and Urban and Rural Family Life in West Africa. In the third seminar the theme was Family Welfare and Planning and an important goal of the seminar was to bring together for discussion of mutually relevant issues, planners, policy makers and administrators as well as research workers in fields related to family life. Thus there were present at the seminar people from a wide variety of Institutions including the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, The National Family Planning Programme and the Regional United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. The fields of research represented included medicine, nutrition, sociology, demography, anthropology, home science and social welfare.

A special word of thanks is due to those who ably took the chair at the various sessions of the seminar and those who agreed to introduce the several sections of the proceedings. These include the Director of the Institute of African Studies Professor Kwabena Nketia, Mr I. K. Boateng, Director of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, Professor D. Ampofo of the Medical School, Mrs. Pearl Jones-Quartey, Head of the Social Administration Unit, Department of Sociology. Dr N. Addo Director of the Population Dynamics Programme, Legon, and Mr S. Kwafo of the National Family Planning Programme.

A departure from previous practice in this seminar series was that the Institute of African Studies collaborated with the Home Science Department in the organization of the seminars. The Home Scientists generously hosted a luncheon for participants in Fidua, their demonstration home and after the seminar Dr. Lila Engberg, Acting Head of the Home Science Department, kindly agreed to set about the painstaking task of preparing the scripts for publication.

The seminar and the subsequent proceedings would not have taken shape without the help and co-operation of all these people and the participants whose papers are listed as well as those who came to take an active part in the lively debates which followed many of the papers. In addition we owe a special word of thanks to the National Family Planning Programme of Ghana which generously provided funds towards the cost of this publication. We look forward to continued clarification and resolution of the important practical and theoretical problems with which this seminar grappled.

**CHRISTINE OPPONG**  
**Institute of African Studies, Legon,**

## PREFACE

May 22nd 1975 marks the Fifth Anniversary of the launching of the Ghana National Family Planning Programme (GNFPP). The launching of the Programme was the first major step in the Government's effort to implement the National Population Policy, which was adopted in 1969 in the light of massive information accumulated over the years in the characteristics of Ghana's population and its growth trends. The Programme, launched both to educate Ghanaian couples in the benefits of planned parenthood to individual couples and the nation and also to provide services by which their fertility objectives could be achieved, has made significant progress since its inception.

By the end of 1974, over 71,000 continuing users had received one method or other of family planning service at one of the 140 clinics run by the participating agencies in the private and public sector of the NFPP. Clinical services are spread throughout the country, though with an uneven distribution. All indications are that the demand for family planning services is growing as a result of the increased awareness of the benefits of family planning to the individual families and to the nation as a whole. For this very reason, the forthcoming Five-Year Plan of the National Family Planning Programme Secretariat (NFPPS) calls for a greater effort in providing service on equitable basis throughout the country, whilst safeguarding the dignity of the individual.

The 1970 *Population Policy* affirmed the Governments' conviction that fertility levels can be brought under control in order that the deleterious effects of unmanaged population growth rates on the total society are minimized. The NFPPS was thus given the challenge to co-ordinate and stimulate both action programmes as well as recommend social policies that can help maximize the attainment of the demographic objectives of the country. In carrying out its mandate the NFPPS has been cognizant of the fact that fertility changes at the individual level are indeed difficult to influence. The difficulty stems from the fact that child bearing and parenthood are desired and respected social phenomena. Consequently, the determinants of individual desired family sizes are influenced by economic, cultural and even political factors. Understanding the influence of these factors requires patient and systematic research into the forces that act upon and modify family information processes. Multi-dimensional and, at times, interdisciplinary research is called for. Encouraging such research either through material and moral support or by direct involvement is not only germane to the total efforts of the NFPPS but crucial.

The publication of the Legon Family Research Paper No. 4 that focuses on "Aspects of Family Welfare and Planning" is indeed a welcome step in developing and increasing our total awareness of the processes of family formation and welfare. There can be little doubt that it is only through adequate examination of relevant complex phenomena that our understanding of social change can be enriched and our planning for a "better life for all" enhanced. For these very reasons, the NFPS is pleased to record through its support of this publication its continued interest in encouraging study and discussion of crucial aspects that relate to individual fertility behaviour.

**A. A. ARMAR**

*(Executive Director)*

National Family Planning Secretariat

Accra, April 7, 1975.

## PART I

### FAMILY WELFARE

BY LILA E. ENGBERG

#### INTRODUCTION

The first paper in this section suggests that West African countries are committed to improving the quality of human life but that they must re-examine their unit of concern. In Africa, the 'family' is considered to include the broad kinship group, too residentially diffused to become the focus of welfare action. Instead the author suggests the residential household be considered the appropriate welfare unit. Both the physical structure and the socio-economic structure of the household could then be examined, problems identified and solutions proposed. The author actually gives concrete suggestions for needed research in these two areas. It is true that much literature from the Western world has implied that the family is a cohabitating group composed only of the husband, wife and their own off-spring, and with the husband as bread winner. An African household with a different composition will have differing kinds of housing, management and welfare problems. Home scientists and welfare workers would do well to take note.

Miss Bouman suggests that the nature and extent of women's participation in rural life has been over-looked. Women are seldom identified as farmers, yet their contribution in the agricultural labour force and in trading is an important part of their domestic responsibilities. Much of their earned incomes provide for the well-being of members of the household, but the amount of that income may be small and the time women spend out of the house may deprive them of time needed for child care and other household responsibilities. Miss Bouman makes a plea for research which would clearly identify various aspects of women's roles and needs, and the development of appropriate technology and training for their benefit and that of their immediate family.

Training in income-earning and home management activities may be especially important for women in situations such as those described by Bleek where the institution of customary marriage may be disintegrating and where the mother or her relatives have the major responsibilities for looking after the children. Although the ten cases presented in the paper belong to only one lineage, similar behaviour patterns could occur elsewhere with accompanying problems in determining the duties, obligations, rights and authorities of both men and women in family life. Obviously, more research of this type would be valuable. Kumeckpor suggests that educational programmes such as those in home science need to develop more awareness of social realities in West Africa and be directed towards men as well as women. Men and women should work together to turn the "house" into a "home" and improve general well-being.

Housing conditions is the indicator of life-style used by Twumasi in his study of the relationship between socio-economic status and utilization of health services in Accra. Achimota Village Adabraka and Tesano are three areas where residents are fairly easily categorized into low medium and high income groups for purposes of such a study. He does not examine the marital relation-



ships within the households but it is interesting to note that females outnumber males in Achimota Village and Adabraka and that the highest proportion seeking medical attention come from these two areas. Twumasi argues that a better understanding of interacting variables at household level is needed in order to determine what factors can bring about improvements in health status. Provision of health services is only a partial answer to improving family welfare.

In these four papers then, attention is being drawn to the residential family unit or household as the unit of welfare concern. The unwillingness to form such a unit on a permanent basis could form the subject of much more argument and discussion, particularly for those who are searching for practical solutions to welfare problems.



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